

**JOINT PUBLIC OVERSIGHT HEARING**  
**“EXAMINATION OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA GOVERNMENT’S UTILIZATION  
OF EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS FUNDING”**

**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

**COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS  
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DAVID A. CATANIA, CHAIRPERSON**



**TESTIMONY OF**  
**LESLIE A. HOTALING**  
**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS**

**Monday, October 6, 2003**  
**10:00 A.M.**  
**Council Chamber**  
**John A. Wilson Building**  
**1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW**

Good morning, Council member Catania, Council member Orange and Council member Patterson. I am Leslie Hotaling, Director of the District's Department of Public Works. I am pleased to be able to report today on how DPW invested its portion of the District's Emergency Preparedness Appropriation.

Under the Emergency Response Plan, the Department of Public Works is the lead agency for Emergency Support Function #3, Public Works and Engineering. In this regard, we have the lead responsibility for debris removal from the District's main corridors, residential streets and public spaces. To accomplish this mission, we marshal crews and equipment from our support agencies, including the Department of Recreation, the Housing Authority, Schools, OPM, and of course, the Department of Transportation's Urban Forestry Administration.

As an emergency response develops, ESF #3 is also responsible for the structural assessment of facilities, performed in coordination with the Department of Consumer & Regulatory Affairs, the Office of Property Management, and the DC public schools. In addition, we are responsible for the provision of emergency potable water and ice distribution, and for securing emergency power (i.e. generators).

DPW was allocated \$1.9 million of the Federal Emergency Preparedness Appropriation. This endowment allowed DPW to develop its employees and build internal capacity. The training and planning tools in which we have invested over the last year have been more valuable than I could have ever imagined. During Isabel, we showed that DPW personnel could move effectively from day-to-day operations to working within the incident command system for emergency responses, with the least amount of confusion.

When we began the process of disaster preparedness planning, I was keenly aware that there was a great deal we did not know. Actually, I had no idea of how much we didn't know! So, we sought out and retained a highly regarded consultant whose expertise focused on the areas applicable to ESF #3.

The consultant helped us identify our strengths and weaknesses. She helped us craft our debris and water distribution plans and educate our employees. She identified for us the specific types of equipment and personnel training we would need as first responders. She also saved us money by advising us regarding the equipment and supplies that we ***didn't*** need to buy, but which we should instead procure as pre-positioned contracts.

I am confident that we now have a better handle on what we previously didn't know. With that knowledge, we ordered the right equipment, such as light towers and generators. We developed a full-fledged training program for all of our employees, incorporating the basic skills and competencies needed for our day-to-day service delivery operations with the skills we will need to respond to the full range of emergencies in our new world..

We designed an Emergency Preparedness Primer (a 101 course) specifically for DPW and trained the majority of our front-line supervisors and many of our employees. We focused employees on how their everyday job duties related to those that they would use during an emergency.

And we focused on personal preparedness ... to raise awareness among employees to ensure their own personal protection of that of their families... so that they could be comfortable reporting to work, knowing that their families were safe at home.

We think that it is this kind of hands-on training and capacity building that gave our employees the confidence to perform so well during the hurricane aftermath.

I don't know whether to call it irony or luck that Hurricane Isabel blew into town just four weeks before our planned ESF#3 preparedness exercise. Now, instead of having a made-up drill on Oct. 16, we will have a complete debrief of our very real hurricane

response. The data and experience we gather from that exercise will guide our planning going forward.

I want to thank the Council for giving me this opportunity to report on DPW's emergency preparedness activities, and would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.